INTERDEPENDENCE AND CONVENTIONAL AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: A DECADE OF TACTICAL, OPERATIONAL, AND STRATEGIC EFFECTS

A Monograph

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Operation Anaconda was the first post-9/11 operation that required CF and SOF interdependence. However, the prevalence of the aforementioned historical barriers combined with the circumstances leading up to Anaconda led to accidental and fractured cooperation, and the operation fell short of its intended decisive effects. Consequently, Anaconda demonstrates the limits of interdependence when the Army and its leaders do not deliberately invest in it. Conversely, the 2007 Iraq surge demonstrates the evolution of CF-SOF interdependence over the preceding five years. It reveals a general absence of those historical barriers and refined, deliberate, and practically institutionalized interdependence achieving synergistic operational and strategic effects.

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ABSTRACT

INTERDEPENDENCE AND CONVENTIONAL AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: A DECADE OF TACTICAL, OPERATIONAL, AND STRATEGIC EFFECTS, by LTC Benjamin F. Siebold, U.S. Army, 43 pages.

Interdependence between conventional forces (CF) and special operations forces (SOF) has developed significantly since the initiation of Operation Enduring Freedom in late 2001. This study examines the effects interdependence achieves through the lenses of Operation Anaconda and the 2007 Iraq surge. It argues that CF and SOF are tactically, operationally, and strategically interdependent, and their effects are operationally and strategically synergistic when they intentionally work in concert with one another. The study additionally examines the historical mission command, cultural, and communication barriers to interdependence through those same operations.

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ACRONYMS

1/1 AD	1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division
3 ID	3rd Infantry Division
ADP	Army Doctrinal Publication
AFO	Advanced Force Operations
BG	Brigadier General
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CF	Conventional Forces
CFLCC	Combined Forces Land Component Command
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CJSOTF-AP	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula
COP	Combat Outpost
CT	Counterterrorism
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GPF	General Purpose Forces
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JAM	Jaish al-Mahdi
JCOA	Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis
JP	Joint Publication
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF-N	Joint Special Operations Task Force North
JSS	Joint Security Station
K2	Kharsi-Khanabad
MG	Major General
MKI	Mohammed Khalil Ibrahim
MND-C	Multi-National Division-Center

SOF   Special Operations Forces

TF   Task Force

TRADOC   Training and Doctrine Command

TTPs   Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

INTRODUCTION

One of the more significant results of the last ten years of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq is the unprecedented level of cooperation between special operations forces (SOF) and Army conventional forces (CF). Since Operation Anaconda in early 2002, SOF and CF have interacted to varying degrees in both deliberate and routine operations, with more purposeful and regular interaction occurring with and after the 2007 Iraq Surge. This interaction, termed "interdependence" in current doctrine, has demonstrated the significant tactical, operational, and strategic effects the two communities achieve when working in full cooperation with one another, and it contrasts with the limited effects they achieve when working independently or in partial cooperation with one another. Accordingly, the last ten years have proven that SOF and conventional forces are tactically, operationally, and strategically interdependent, and interdependence actually achieves synergistic operational and strategic effects.

This study examines interdependence and its effects through two case studies: Operation Anaconda and the Iraq Surge. Operation Anaconda provides an example of accidental and partial interdependence and the truncated effects it achieves; conversely, the Iraq Surge provides an example of deliberate interdependence and the synergistic effects it achieves. In examining these operations, this study will additionally address historic barriers between SOF and CF and their impact on successful interdependence.

Interdependence

Definitions

Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The Army Capstone Concept*, which describes the Army's "vision of the future operational environment, the role of the Army in the joint force, and the broad capabilities required by future Army forces,"

specifically defines CF-SOF interdependence as the "deliberate and mutual reliance by one force on another's inherent capabilities designed to provide complementary and reinforcing effects."[1] Similarly, Joint Publication 1 (JP1) defines joint interdependence as, "the purposeful reliance by one Service on another Service's capabilities to maximize complementary and reinforcing effects of both (i.e., synergy)." While this publication refers to interdependence among the joint branches of service, the linkage between these two definitions is apparent as both refer to interdependent forces achieving effects greater than the sum of their parts.[2]

In its definition for interdependence, JP 1 also specifically identifies complementary and reinforcing effects as "synergy."[3] The 2009 edition of TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0 defines synergy as,

> Integrating, synchronizing, and employing military forces and capabilities, as well as nonmilitary resources, in a manner that results in greater combat power and applies force from different dimensions to shock, disrupt, and defeat opponents. Integrating and synchronizing the actions of conventional and special operations forces and capabilities in joint operations and in multiple domains.[4]

This definition not only describes the increased combat power and overwhelming effects synergy produces, but it specifically recognizes the synergistic nature of integrated and synchronized CF and SOF efforts.

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[1]Training and Doctrine Command, Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The U.S. Army Capstone Concept* (Fort Eustis, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 19, 2012), 38.

[2]Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf, March 25, 2013), I-2.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Training and Doctrine Command, Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The U.S. Army Capstone Concept: Operational Adaptability –Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict,* (Fort Monroe, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 21, 2009), i.

Combining these descriptions of interdependence and synergy produces the perspective this study seeks to demonstrate – CF-SOF interdependence requires deliberate, purposeful reliance that in turn produces effects beyond what either force can generate in isolation.

<u>Context</u>

The rise of SOF-CF interdependence is a product of cumulative and difficult lessons learned during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. In June of 2012, at the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure "we actually learn the lessons from the last decade of war," the Joint Staff J7 Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division (JCOA) published the first volume of its "Decade of War" study.[5] Through the course of their research, the JCOA reviewed forty-six other studies from 2003 through early 2012 and examined over 400 findings, observations, and best practices to "identify enduring lessons that can inform future joint force development."[6] One of the eleven "strategic themes" this comprehensive study identified was CF-SOF interdependence.[7]

Before the military began to understand the salient impact of interdependence, the general paradigm of SOF-CF relations was conventional battlespace owners and sequestered SOF operating in isolation of each other, creating divisions, and handicapping each others' operational success. A Fort Leavenworth information paper on interdependence noted, "In 2002 our Nation went to war with two forces: GPF [General Purpose Forces] prepared to win against traditional adversaries in direct combat and Special Operations Forces prepared to prevail in an irregular environment. For the next few years, the best we could hope for was a deconfliction of activities

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[5]Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, *Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations* (Suffolk, VA: Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 2012), v.

[6]Ibid., iii.

[7]Ibid., 2.

between the forces."[8] Accordingly, SOF-CF segregation was quite pronounced in the first halves

of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, although more so in Iraq due

to the emphasis it received from both the US government and military. Describing the context of

early SOF-CF relations, the JCOA study stated,

> In post-2003 Iraq, SOF operations were not always well coordinated with GPF. This led
> to situations where GPF, as the battlespace owners (BSO), were left managing the
> second-order effects of SOF targeting operations. GPF complained about not receiving
> notice of impending operations, not receiving intelligence that came from SOF
> operations, and significant disruption of their battlespace in the aftermath of those
> operations. Similar complaints were made by GPF in Afghanistan through 2008.[9]

As the wars progressed into their latter halves, interdependence also progressed. In Mosul

in 2005, 1-24 Infantry integrated with elements of 10th Special Forces Group to destroy the

leadership of the rapidly growing Mosul based Al Qaeda in Iraq insurgency; their combined

efforts led to the capture of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's chief subordinate, Abu Talha, Talha's

replacement, Abu Bara, and eastern Mosul terrorist leader Mullah Mahdi.[10] This integration and

intelligence sharing later formed the blueprint for CF-SOF intelligence fusion cells and served as

the catalyst for the interdependence that became the hallmark of operations in Iraq from the 2007

surge through the conclusion of combat operations there.[11] Accordingly, precedents set in Iraq

later shaped the growth of interdependence in Afghanistan, especially as the nation's focus

shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan.

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[8]Aaron Brown, "Information Paper: SOF-GPF Interdependence" (Fort Leavenworth, KS),
http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/AIWFC/Repository/SOF-GPF%20Integration%20Staff%20Study.pdf
(accessed September 5, 2013).

[9]Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 22.

[10]John McGrath, ed., *Between the Rivers: Combat Action in Iraq 2003-2005* (Ft Leavenworth, KS:
Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2012), 56.

[11]Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 22.

<u>Current Discussions and the 7<u>th</u> Warfighting Function</u>

As commonplace as interdependence became in both Iraq and Afghanistan, it remained a bottom-up driven function.[12] Co-located, tactical CF and SOF units integrated out of necessity and through personal relationships, vice a common understanding of capabilities and an organizationally-driven process.[13] However, the Army and its senior leaders eventually recognized the need to institutionalize interdependence.

In a 2012 article for *Army Magazine*, Major General (MG) Bennet Sacolick and Brigadier General (BG) Wayne Grigsby stated, "the lack of comprehensive special operations and conventional force (CF) interdependence impedes the Army's ability to operationally leverage the unique cultural capabilities of special operations and inculcate them across the conventional force."[14] At the conclusion of their article, they offered several recommendations to establish meta-interdependence; one more prominent recommendation was the development of a seventh war-fighting function to address the human domain (and by extension, interdependence).[15] The 2012 Army Capstone Concept additionally acknowledged the need for a seventh war-fighting function to both "capture the tasks and systems that provide lethal and nonlethal capabilities to assess, shape, deter, and influence the decisions and behavior of a people, its security forces, and its government," and serve as a "driver for the interdependence of Army conventional and special operations forces."[16]

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[12]Brown.

[13]Major General Bennet Sacolick and Brigadier General Wayne Grigsby, "Special Operations/Conventional Forces Interdependence: A Critical Role in 'Prevent, Shape, Win'," *Army Magazine* (June 2012): 40.

[14]Ibid., 39.

[15]Ibid., 40-42.

[16]Training and Doctrine Command. Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The U.S. Army Capstone Concept* (Fort Eustis, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 19, 2012), 16.

After over two years of analysis and development, the Army formally adopted "Engagement" as a seventh warfighting function in early 2014.[17] The Engagement Warfighting Function institutionalizes and places a premium upon a "culturally attuned" force capable of effectively interacting with any given military, government, and/or population necessary and enhances CF-SOF interdependence.[18] It requires future Army leaders and forces that effectively account for and employ partner capabilities, understand the human aspects of an operational environment, and work with and through indigenous populations to influence human behavior, and conventional and special operations forces that "operate interdependently to provide the joint force commander with a balanced force that enhances operational effectiveness and consistency."[19]

In addition to interdependence receiving formal recognition in the Army's warfighting functions, the core SOF doctrinal manual, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3.05, *Special Operations,* also addresses it. In a section specifically dedicated to interdependence it states,

> Army special operations forces and conventional forces must blend their individual activities more effectively. Interdependence between special operations forces and conventional forces will increase the effectiveness of shaping activities and improve execution of counterterrorism and irregular warfare. A high level of interdependence has been developed over the last decade, but a more cohesive special operations and conventional force effort will improve the Army's ability to execute decisive action by combining the capability advantages of each force. The Army must seamlessly integrate lethal and nonlethal special operations and conventional force capabilities while maintaining unique cultures and capabilities that shape the environment and enable success of the joint force in the operational environment.[20]

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[17]Willis Hintz, Henry Franke, and Major Dave Lange, "Army Publishes Functional Concept for Engagement," Army Capabilities Integration Center, February 28, 2014, http://www.arcic.army.mil/Articles/cdld-Army-Publishes-Functional-Concept-for-Engagement.aspx (accessed March 8, 2014).

[18]Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-8-5, *The U.S. Army Functional Concept For Engagement* (Fort Eustis, VA: Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, February 24, 2014), iii.

[19]Ibid., 6.

[20]Department of the Army. Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3.05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, May 17, 2012), 16.

The adoption of the Engagement Warfighting Function and ADP 3.05's summation of the need for interdependence and the related future requirements underscore the conceptual and practical momentum interdependence has gained since the latter years of Operation Iraqi Freedom; its frequency in lessons learned and appearances in doctrine validate its value to the current and future Army. This study will further amplify this value and the need for inculcating interdependence in meaningful and lasting ways throughout the Army.

<div align="center">Historical Barriers to Interdependence</div>

Several historically pre-existing barriers combined to diminish any level of consistent interdependence. This study will additionally examine three of the more impactful and prevalent barriers: problematic mission command structures, cultural biases, and the resulting lack of communication and intelligence sharing.

<u>Mission Command</u>

The greatest institutional barrier to interdependence was the CF and SOF mission command structure. CF and SOF mission command rarely, if ever, intersected below the Combatant Command or Joint Task Force level. Forces Command and Special Operations Command are the two respective force-providing commands for CF and SOF; Combatant Commands and Theater Special Operations Commands control regionally deployed CF and SOF, and the Joint Special Operations Command maintains separate control over joint special mission units. This top down driven exclusion permeated CF and SOF commands to the lowest levels and exacerbated the aforementioned cultural and communication and intelligence sharing barriers.

<u>Cultures</u>

Prior to 9/11, there was a relatively innate cultural distrust between special operations and conventional communities. A common belief within the special operations community was conventional soldiers lack the skill and training to conduct operations alongside special operators; while a common belief within the conventional community was special operators tended to be

<div align="center">7</div>

arrogant and possessed a myopic perspective that failed to account for the myriad of problem sets with which conventional forces must contend. These perspectives predisposed leaders within both communities to treating the other with a certain level of contempt and distrust.

<u>Communication and Intelligence Sharing</u>

The segregated CF-SOF mission command structure and divisive cultures resulted in a paucity of communication and intelligence sharing. Additionally, the nature of SOF operations and their typical classification (or in many cases, over-classification) exacerbated the problem. SOF operations as a whole are typically classified secret or higher, and consequently, SOF units were generally averse to communicate much less share intelligence with conventional units unless specifically directed. Even when specifically directed, SOF units often only communicated or shared intelligence that was absolutely necessary.

CASE STUDY #1 – OPERATION ANACONDA

Operation Anaconda, the first action in Operation Enduring Freedom involving conventional forces, presents a dichotomy of tactical, operational, and strategic successes and failures. It represented the first instance of interdependence in US Army combat operations since an infantry battalion from the 10th Mountain Division assisted in the extraction of Task Force Ranger during the Battle of Mogadishu on October 4, 1993. However, this interdependence was a byproduct of the circumstances rather than a deliberate decision, and this accidental interdependence, while enabling the operation, created significant Clauswitzian friction among the participants and ultimately diluted the operation's efficacy.

Background

In March of 2002, US forces conducted an air assault into the Shahikot Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Paktia Province to destroy Al Qaeda forces consolidated there in a well prepared defense. Determined not to allow Al Qaeda forces the opportunity to slip out of a decisive fight as they had in Tora Bora in December of 2001, US Central Command leaders and planners

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augmented the special operations forces, who had previously been the only US elements conducting combat operations in Afghanistan, with units of the 10th Mountain and 101st Airborne Divisions. The operation called for Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) elements to conduct deep reconnaissance ahead of the operation, light infantry forces of the 10th Mountain Division and the 101st Airborne Division to conduct an air assault to block passes into and out of the valley, and Afghan forces in conjunction with US Special Forces teams to conduct a ground attack into the valley and clear several villages on the valley floor.

Conventional and special operations planners believed Al Qaeda forces had consolidated within the villages on the valley floor; however, upon arrival at their helicopter landing zones, the infantry air assault forces immediately came under intense direct and indirect fire from Al Qaeda forces occupying prepared positions in high ground surrounding the valley. The Afghan forces and their Special Forces counterparts were unable to mount their ground attack as planned, and over the course of the next several days, the 10th Mountain and 101st Airborne light infantry units and JSOC reconnaissance elements fought close engagements with Al Qaeda forces who were once again ultimately able to escape back to Pakistan.

<center>Cultural Barriers</center>

<u>Task Force 11 and Advanced Force Operations</u>

As planners developed Operation Anaconda and key leaders discussed roles and responsibilities for their units, the cultural bias between conventional and SOF leaders began to influence decision-making at the highest levels, particularly in the role a certain unit in the JSOC task force, Task Force 11, (TF 11), would play. TF 11 consisted mainly of elements from the 75th Ranger Regiment, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and two other special mission

units.[21] They had already been in Afghanistan for several months and by the time planning for Anaconda began, were fully involved in targeting key Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders.[22]

A small, ad hoc, JSOC unit, designated Advanced Force Operations (AFO), had the task of conducting long range, high risk reconnaissance to identify and locate high value Al Qaeda personnel for follow-on TF 11 strikes or raids. AFO existed within the structure of a Central Command (CENTCOM) intelligence fusion cell headed by a brigadier general, but they reported directly to TF 11.[23] As Operation Anaconda grew from an idea circulated among the special operations community to a large-scale operation with a major conventional force role, the AFO commander, Lieutenant Colonel Pete Blaber, began to integrate with conventional force commanders and planners from the 10th Mountain Division (Combined Joint Task Force [CJTF] Mountain) and 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (TF Rakkasans) in order to bridge a significant intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) gap.

The manned and unmanned aerial reconnaissance platforms employed in the months and weeks leading up to Operation Anaconda were unable to detect any of the Al Qaeda or Taliban forces' positions or movements due to the enemy's understanding of US reconnaissance capabilities and subsequent ability to camouflage themselves against the mountainous terrain. Consequently, commanders and planners lacked any real understanding of the enemy composition, disposition, or strength in the valley. Blaber, a particularly progressive thinker who believed in maximizing the capabilities of all adjacent units, knew that his reconnaissance teams could provide a picture of the battlefield otherwise unavailable, so he offered their capabilities.[24]

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[21]Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005), 29.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Naylor, 34.

[24]Ibid., 38.

While Blaber was readily willing to work with the 10th Mountain and 3rd Brigade headquarters, the JSOC Commander, MG Dell Dailey, was in no way receptive to the idea of one of his units partnering with conventional forces; as MG Warren Edwards, the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) deputy commanding general for operations stated, "In almost every case, Dell Dailey was probably resistant to using any kind of conventional force."[25] From his perspective, Dailey believed the JSOC elements' sole purpose was hunting Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Blaber argued that the enemy picture he and his Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) counterparts were developing in the Shahikot Valley bore strong indicators of senior leader presence in the valley, and that therefore his teams' employment there was directly in keeping with the TF 11 mission. Dailey remained unconvinced and was steadfast in his opposition to AFO conducting "strategic reconnaissance for the conventional guys."[26]

Since Dailey was not specifically directing TF 11 or AFO (they received direction from and reported to CENTCOM), he could not preclude Blaber from continuing his plan of support for Operation Anaconda, and the AFO commander made the decision to unilaterally report information to MG Buster Hagenbeck, the 10th Mountain Division Commander and eventual ground force commander for Operation Anaconda. In reference to his decision and relationship with Hagenbeck, Blaber stated, "I was the commander of the interagency reconnaissance effort – my information was his information."[27] News of Blaber's ongoing relationship with the CJTF Mountain angered Dailey, and he considered relieving Blaber.[28] Ultimately, the AFO provided reconnaissance in the days leading up to and directed aerial fires during the operation. Nonetheless, Dailey's resistance to the conventional-special operations cooperation was

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[25]Naylor, 141.

[26]Ibid., 81.

[27]Pete Blaber, *The Mission, the Men, and Me: Lessons from a Former Delta Force Commander* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 243.

[28]Naylor, 141.

indicative of resistance that, while not pervasive, influenced the planning and execution of Ananconda and created an undue strain on commanders and planners in an operation already fraught with obstacles.

Communication Barriers

As the conventional and special operations units developed into an ad hoc task force, it became immediately clear that they would have to communicate across their previously compartmentalized headquarters. Communication and intelligence sharing among those headquarters during both planning and execution of Operation Anaconda fluctuated between adequate and non-existent. This fluctuation had direct and significant impacts, both positive and negative, throughout the operation.

<u>TF Dagger and Planning</u>

The idea for Anaconda originated within the Joint Special Operations Task Force North (JSOTF-N), later designated Task Force Dagger and one of two US Army Special Forces headquarters in Afghanistan. Assessing the enemy situation in eastern Afghanistan following the Tora Bora operation, one of Dagger's teams, call sign Texas 14, attempted a reconnaissance of the Shahikot in late January, but turned back after their partnered Afghan forces warned them of a large enemy force concentrating there; on the basis of this report, TF Dagger began to focus their intelligence efforts on the Shahikot.[29] TF Rakkasans' and CJTF Mountain's involvement developed from TF Dagger's eventual realization that the enemy situation in the valley was beyond their and their Afghan partners' capabilities. They had the Afghan combat experience and partnered Afghan forces, TF Rakkasans had the necessary infantrymen, and the 10th Mountain Division headquarters had the necessary general officer for mission command.

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[29]Richard Stewart, *The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001 - March 2002*, CMH PUB 70-83-1 (Histories Division of the Center of Military History, 2004), 32.

As the 10th Mountain and the Rakkasans arrived to Bagram and began to familiarize themselves with a plan still in its infancy, bureaucratic and institutional norms stove-piped and hoarded existing intelligence into its various component agencies; conventional commanders and planners, up to Hagenbeck himself, had access to very little, if any of it.[30] Consequently, the individuals who would ultimately have responsibility for the planning and execution of the mission had to initially spend precious time and staff energy on simply gathering information. As the operation continued to develop and gained momentum, the relationship between conventional and Special Forces headquarters improved. With few exceptions, the TF Dagger planners and staff fully integrated their Rakkasans counterparts as the latter group arrived in Bagram in early February 2002. This integration ultimately allowed the two staffs, in conjunction with the 10th Mountain staff, to work through disagreements over tactics, compressed timelines, and ad hoc mission command to develop a coherent plan involving multiple Afghan and coalition partner, conventional, and special operations units.

TF 11 and Intelligence Sharing

Despite Blaber's efforts, communication and intelligence sharing among TF 11 and their CIA counterparts and CJTF Mountain was problematic throughout planning and execution. As a rule, TF 11's commander, an Air Force brigadier general, chose not to communicate with Hagenbeck, despite the fact that the 10th Mountain commander was the senior commander on the ground; Blaber and his deputy became the sole conduit for any communication or intelligence from TF 11.[31] As the operation went from planning to execution, this limited communication endangered the TF Rakkasans air assault; as the operation progressed during execution, this limited communication proved catastrophic for some of TF 11's own men.

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[30]Naylor, 13.

[31]Naylor, 141.

Believing the United States would abandon their fight in Afghanistan if sufficiently

bloodied, Osama Bin Laden and his forces prepared the Shahikot for a deliberate defense in order

to deal such a sufficiently bloody blow to US forces and compel their withdrawal from

Afghanistan.[32] Days before initiating the operation, the CIA received a fairly detailed report from

a trusted Taliban source working with the fighters in the Shahikot Valley. The report indicated

that a force of 580 to 700 Al Qaeda fighters were in a prepared defense with heavy weapons and

mortars in the high ground in and around the Shahikot; this information was contrary to the

enemy situation around which the US forces had developed their entire plan – 200-300 fighters

hiding among the civilian populace in villages on the valley floor.[33] However, the CIA report

never made it to Hagenbeck or any other conventional decision maker in CJTF Mountain or the

Rakkasans.[34] Consequently, they never adjusted their plan to account for an enemy force two to

three times what they had planned against, in prepared positions, and occupying high ground

throughout the valley.

<u>TF 11 and Takur Ghar</u>

As the operation went from planning to execution and TF Rakkasans elements fought a

motivated, well-positioned Al Qaeda force, the AFO reconnaissance teams remained in place

directing aerial fires. A few hours prior to dawn on D+2, TF 11 inserted a team on Takur Ghar

Mountain on the east side of the Shahikot. The mountain dominated the valley, and Al Qaeda

fighters had a well-entrenched fighting position on the top from which they had been firing

effectively on Charlie Company, 1-87th since the operation began.[35] Due to a series of air

clearance and mechanical delays, the team made the decision to land directly on top of the

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[32]Lester W. Grau and Dodge Billingsley, *Operation Anaconda: America's First Major Battle in Afghanistan* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2011), 118-119.

[33]Grau and Billingsley, 124.

[34]Naylor, 157.

[35]Grau and Billingsley, 229.

mountain as opposed to offsetting and walking up. As the helicopter attempted its landing, the Al Qaeda fighters hit the helicopter with a rocket propelled grenade, causing significant damage to the aircraft and jarring one of the team from the back of it. Having lost its hydraulics, the aircraft was unable to return to recover him and was forced into a hard landing well away from the top of Takur Ghar.

As the team prepared for its Takur Ghar mission, it established communications exclusively with the TF 11 headquarters, cutting out Blaber and the AFO and thereby CJTF Mountain's best link to TF 11 operations.[36] Likewise, and continuing their precedent of limited to no communication, TF 11 did not inform CJTF Mountain of the team's insertion into TF Rakkasans' battlespace, so as events unfolded on Takur Ghar, CJTF 11 was completely unaware of the lost operator and the downed helicopter. Meanwhile, the 2-187 Infantry tactical command post was only 700 meters from the crash site, close enough to move to and secure the aircraft and crew.[37] Such coordination with the nearby infantry battalion could have freed the team to immediately return to Takur Ghar on the downed CH47's partnered aircraft and attempt to recover their lost teammate.[38] Instead, TF 11 planned the rescue in isolation, even forsaking the assistance of the AFO headquarters, and extracted the team and helicopter crew altogether, eliminating any realistic chance of a rescue. The incident would become one of the most famous in all of Operation Anaconda. When a Ranger quick reaction force finally went to rescue the lost operator, they engaged in a daylong firefight with the Al Qaeda element dug in on the top of the mountain, and the Takur Ghar fight would ultimately cost seven special operators their lives.

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[36]Naylor, 309.

[37]Donald Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001–September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2010), 157.

[38]Naylor, 321.

The communication that took place among the conventional and special operations headquarters involved in Operation Anaconda was up to that point unprecedented. It enabled the planning of the largest land operation since Desert Storm and the integration of multiple coalition and Afghan partner units. As effective as this communication was in enabling the planning of the operation, it was equally fragmented and parochial at crucial points during planning and throughout execution and either placed Soldiers at a significantly increased risk or cost them their lives.

<div align="center">Mission Command Barriers</div>

Even more than the historical cultural differences or the ebb and flow of communication and intelligence sharing, the convoluted mission command structure CENTCOM established for Operation Anaconda presented the most significant obstacle to mission success. This structure created fractured efforts, confused reporting chains, and exacerbated the previously described cultural and communication problems.

As the CENTCOM Commander, General Tommy Franks maintained overall responsibility for US operations in Afghanistan. Layered beneath his headquarters were CFLCC in Camp Doha, Kuwait, the 10th Mountain Division Headquarters (which also served as CFLCC Forward) in Kharsi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan (K2), 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in Kandahar, an additional 10th Mountain infantry battalion, and various aviation and support units.[39] As the CFLCC Commander, Lieutenant General Paul Mikolashek had responsibility for all ground units in Afghanistan, which in addition to the conventional forces included Task Forces Dagger and K-bar. Task Force Dagger, commanded by Colonel John Mulholland, consisted primarily of Army Special Forces and had responsibility for operations generally in northern Afghanistan. Task Force K-bar, commanded by Commodore Robert Harward, consisted

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[39]Naylor, 12.

<div align="center">16</div>

of SEALs, Army Special Forces, and allied SOF and had responsibility for operations generally in southern Afghanistan.[40] Bypassing Mikolashek and reporting directly to Franks were Task Force 11 and Task Force Bowie. Task Force Bowie, commanded by Brigadier General Gary Harrell, consisted of intelligence teams, detention facility personnel, and interrogators from across the Department of Defense and inter-agency and had responsibility for fusing all intelligence gained in Afghanistan; the AFO fell under Harrell's TF Bowie but reported to TF 11.[41] This fragmented and stove-piped structure was the one in place as the Shahikot Valley began to generate interest within the various commands.

CJTF Mountain as Mission Command Headquarters

The genesis for Operation Anaconda was the product of a Task Force Dagger-led mission in the Tora Bora region of eastern Afghanistan wherein US Army Special Forces employed a proxy Afghan force against another sizeable Al Qaeda force. The operation failed to achieve its intended purpose of dealing a decisive blow to Al Qaeda, and a majority of their fighters and leaders, to include Osama Bin Laden himself, safely retreated into the ungoverned areas of northwestern Pakistan.[42] In the wake of the Tora Bora operation, the prevailing opinion among the participating commands, particularly COL Mullholland and Task Force Dagger, was that similar operations in the future would require the capability and reliability of US infantry; simultaneously, the Shahikot Valley was beginning to appear in multiple intelligence reports.[43]

Despite the fact they were neighbors on K2, Task Force Dagger and the 10th Mountain headquarters initially developed the enemy picture and a plan for the Shahikot in duplicated efforts. As Mullholland realized the scope of a mission in the Shahikot required more combat

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[40]Billingsley and Grau, 114.

[41]Naylor, 33-34.

[42]Billingsley and Grau, 76.

[43]Naylor, 48.

power than he could generate internally, he simultaneously realized that such a mission would also require a headquarters higher than his own. In an uncommonly magnanimous move, he requested Hagenbeck serve as the mission commander.[44] It was not until this point that the 10th Mountain and Task Force Dagger began to work deliberately in concert. CENTCOM and CFLCC both approved of Hagenbeck serving as the mission commander and commander of all ground forces in Afghanistan (with the exception of Task Force 11), but Mikolashek waited a week before officially giving the order.[45] This delay wasted precious time and precluded the 10th Mountain staff's ability to task the Dagger staff, require them at meetings, or otherwise generate cohesive planning during the critical early stages of their collective efforts.

Even after Mikolashek's order was official, the 10th Mountain staff continued to receive resistance from both Task Forces Dagger and K-bar, particularly the latter (K-bar's tasks for Anaconda were reconnaissance and an outer cordon around the Shahikot); the lead 10th Mountain planner, Major Paul Wille, stated, "I could never count on units actually doing what they were tasked to do in the operations order," and in reference their collaborative planning sessions, "We never had everybody in the same room at one time."[46]

The mission command structure in place prior to Operation Anaconda initially precluded SOF-CF collaboration altogether and reinforced the paradigm of SOF and CF working in isolation. The CFLCC Commander's delayed order for CJTF Mountain to assume mission command of all non-TF 11 units participating in Anaconda exacerbated that pattern, and it continued to plague CJTF Mountain as they assumed that role.

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[44]Donald P. Wright et al., 132.

[45]Naylor, 82-83.

[46]Ibid., 129.

TF 11 Exclusion

As problematic as the mission command structure was for the SOF and CF elements within CJTF Mountain, TF 11's exclusion from Hagenbeck's command authority as the senior commander in Afghanistan and the one responsible for Operation Anaconda was a greater issue. TF 11 represented a significant but largely untapped capability, and their reporting chain and mission set allowed them to operate with near impunity.[47] Consequently, they had combat power to spare for an operation where they could have contributed significantly; when they did involve themselves during the execution of Anaconda, their lack of transparency and reporting created friction within the tactical operations centers monitoring the battle and isolated efforts that, if coordinated, would have been significantly more effective.

TF 11 maintained an augmented company of Rangers as an internal quick reaction force for its targeted raids and a guard force for its compounds. Understanding this highly-trained infantry company was largely underutilized, Blaber requested TF 11 allow them to participate in Anaconda as additional blocking forces, but under no compulsion to provide the Rangers or participate in Anaconda in any way, Trebon flatly refused.[48]

The communication problems present during the Takur Ghar catastrophe were another first order effect of the bifurcated CJTF Mountain and TF 11 mission command structure. The TF 11 Commander and his headquarters were located in Masirah, Oman (although Trebon did position himself in Bagram for Anaconda). The next decision maker in the TF 11 chain of command was General Franks in Tampa, Florida (the JSOC Commander had no formal authority over the task force but did influence decision-making, manning, and task organization).[49] With

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[47]Mark Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2004), 23.

[48]Naylor, 121.

[49]Ibid., 36.

Hagenbeck excluded from the TF 11 chain of command and Trebon's general refusal to communicate laterally, despite their elements' close proximity, Hagenbeck's only access to TF 11 was indirect, via Blaber's willingness to integrate with and provide information to CJTF Mountain.[50] As Hagenebeck did learn of events on Takur Ghar through secondary reporting, he was powerless to bring his assets or forces to bear on the situation, and Trebon was content to manage it himself.[51]

TF 11's exclusion from CJTF Mountain's mission command of Operation Anaconda prevented the optimal use of the forces available for the largest US operation of the war up to that point. It further allowed them to operate in the valley without coordinating with or reporting to TF Rakkasans or CJTF Mountain. In Hagenbeck's own words, TF 11 "had a distinct, different authority to report to, which went back through [another] general officer, and directly to Gen. Franks."[52] As a result, two different general officers, separated by a dysfunctional mission command arrangement, fought two distinct and significant battles within the same battlespace, while each could have benefitted significantly from the other's assistance.

Tactical Effects

The interdependence demonstrated during Operation Anaconda produced its most positive effects tactically. The AFO operators' actions in the pre-air assault hours allowed the lift helicopters to accomplish their mission of inserting the Rakkasans into the valley, and the combined actions of the AFO teams and TF Rakkasans infantrymen during the heaviest fighting of the operation inflicted a disproportionately high number of casualties on the enemy.

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[50]Naylor, 141.

[51]Ibid., 319.

[52]Elaine Grossman, "Was Operation Anaconda Ill-Fated from Start?," Project On Government Oversight Defense and the National Interest, accessed March 29, 2014, http://www.dnipogo.org/grossman/army_analyst_blames.htm.

AFO Support to the Air Assault

The AFO reconnaissance teams inserted a little more than 48 hours in advance of the Rakkasans' air assault to gain fidelity on enemy composition, disposition, and patterns of life. In the course of accomplishing that mission, they also prevented the brigade task force from sustaining catastrophic losses in the initial lifts of the air assault.

Approximately twenty-four hours before the insertion of the first lift, an AFO reconnaissance team on high ground at the southern end of the valley observed a fortified Al Qaeda position occupying the same piece of terrain with multiple fighters and a heavy machine gun.[53] The machine gun's position allowed it to dominate the air corridors into the valley and deliver plunging fires on those corridors and any landing zones.[54] That same piece of terrain also eventually served as the location from which the Rakkasans commander and his headquarters element fought the battle.[55]

Just over two hours prior to the first insertion, the team destroyed the Al Qaeda position and what turned out to be five fighters armed with the 12.7 mm machine gun, a PKM machine gun, RPG7s, a Dragonov sniper rifle, and AK47s.[56] Had the AFO team not eliminated this position, the Al Qaeda fighters would have been in a position to easily destroy multiple aircraft and the task force mission command element and turn the operation from an attack into a large-scale rescue mission.

AFO and TF Rakkasans Small Unit Actions

Following the air assault, the three AFO teams remained in place to support the infantry as they fought their way into their blocking positions. Throughout the course of the battle, the

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[53]Naylor, 173.

[54]Ibid., 173.

[55]Billingsley and Grau, 184.

[56]Naylor, 191.

Rakkasans' infantrymen and the AFO reconnaissance teams were involved in direct firefights, mortar duels, and close air support engagements. From the moment they stepped off their helicopters, the infantrymen in the valley engaged Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in direct firefights at close range as well as mortar fights with enemy elements beyond small arms range. While Task Force Rakkasans units were engaged with enemy they could identify, the AFO teams engaged enemy positions the infantrymen could not identify.

From their observation posts high above the valley floor, the teams located and directed air strikes against Al Qaeda machine gun and mortar teams and command and control nodes dug in beyond observation of the infantry's positions, relieving pressure on those positions and disrupting Al Qaeda's ability to synchronize their efforts and fires against them.[57] The combination of the Rakkasans' direct and mortar fire engagements and AFO air strikes resulted in conservative estimates of 150-300 enemy killed in action over the 72 hours of the most intense fighting.[58] However, the lack of direct communication between the AFO operators and the Rakkasans infantrymen limited their combined toll on the enemy as the two forces unwittingly competed for the same aircraft sorties and never synchronized their efforts on the battlefield (Rakkasans elements were largely unaware of the AFO teams' locations or presence on the battlefield).

<div align="center">Operational Effects</div>

Operation Anaconda's operational effects were a combination of success and failure. The conduct of the operation was in itself a testament to interdependence on a level not seen before, and it opened the door to conventional forces in Afghanistan. However, the intended Afghan main effort ground assault did not materialize due to miscommunication between the

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[57]Naylor, 263.

[58]Ibid., 375.

conventional and special operations planners at multiple levels, and the absence of the main effort in such a singular operation translated to operational effects.

Enabling of Operation Anaconda

The operation in the Tora Bora region that preceded Operation Anaconda was the first opportunity US forces had to fix and destroy Al Qaeda forces, but weaknesses in the Afghan forces employed in that operation coupled with insufficient numbers allowed the bulk of the Al Qaeda forces to escape into Pakistan. Following Tora Bora, commanders at echelon knew that future large-scale operations would require conventional forces, and as TF Dagger developed the situation in the Shahikot, they knew any operation there would be large in scale. COL Mulholland's willingness to involve a conventional division headquarters and infantry brigade task force and the subsequent coordination among the various headquarters were the core enablers of an operation that would have otherwise not been feasible and was the catalyst for future conventional force commitment in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Failure of Afghan Militia Main Effort

The Anaconda plan designated TF Dagger's partnered Afghan militia forces as the main effort for the operation and the Rakkasans as the supporting effort. The plan called for the Afghans to conduct a ground assault to clear the villages in the valley floor while the Rakkasans blocked the valley's passes. The primary condition for the Afghan assault was an hour-long preparatory bombardment on a prominent terrain feature guarding the entrance to the valley; however, communication failures among the TF Dagger, CJTF Mountain, and CLFCC staffs during planning resulted in little to no air support for the Special Forces-Afghan main effort.[59]

As they moved without the cover of US air support, they came under effective enemy mortar and rocket propelled grenade fire well short of their objective, sustained casualties, and

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[59]Naylor, 207.

retreated back to their staging area in Gardez.[60] The unsuccessful Afghan ground assault allowed Al Qaeda forces to focus solely on the Rakkasans' air assault and put a distinctly US face on the main thrust of the operation. Once again, a communication failure between the conventional and special operations forces resulted in a failed key task.

<div align="center">Strategic Effects</div>

While the interdependence displayed for Operation Anaconda was truly unprecedented, it was haphazard and incomplete, and the operation consequently failed to achieve Hagenbeck's endstate of killing or capturing all al-Qaeda forces in the Gardez-Khost region.[61] Strategically, this missed opportunity allowed Al Qaeda forces and their leadership structure to remain functional, albeit degraded, and contributed to the now decade and counting duration of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The dysfunctional chain of command that failed to link all participating forces under a single ground commander and the erratic intelligence sharing and communication between conventional and special operations forces prevented unity of effort and effective synchronization among them. The infantry and special operations units' resultant fragmented and unsynchronized maneuver created gaps and seams in time and space in their encirclement of the valley. Similar to US failures in Tora Bora, this ineffective encirclement allowed large numbers of Al Qaeda fighters in the Shahikot to escape back into Pakistan.

As US and coalition forces conducted site exploitation in the concluding days of the operation, they discovered multiple indicators of a significant enemy force – sequential defensive belts running to the border of Pakistan, stockpiles of food and life support items, enormous ammunition caches, multiple heavy weapons to include anti-aircraft guns and missiles, cargo and

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[60]Billingsley and Grau, 193.

[61]Wright et al., 138.

pick-up trucks, and even a disk labeled "USS Cole."[62] Conspicuously absent from the site exploitation was the presence of any significant numbers of enemy dead; of the conservatively-estimated 600-1,000 fighters in the valley, anywhere from 300 to 850 made it out.[63]

As significant as the escape of the large number of rank and file Al Qaeda fighters into Pakistan was, the known escape of one high level Al Qaeda leader and the suspected escape of at least two others through the piecemeal US cordon were more significant. Tohir Yuldeshev, an Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader who commanded a force of roughly 200 Uzbek fighters, was a confirmed high value target in the valley during Anaconda, and he slipped through the US positions back into Pakistan; he and his Uzbeks later formed the core of Al Qaeda forces in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province tribal area.[64] The reported overall commander of enemy fighters in the Shahikot was Jalaluddin Haqani, a commander during the war with the Soviets and one of the more significant insurgent commanders still active in Afghansistan today.[65] Further up the Al Qaeda chain of command, multiple but unconfirmed reports indicated that Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama Bin Laden's second in command, was not only in the valley but was wounded during the fighting. Four days into the operation and after the majority of the enemy fighters had melted back into Pakistan, an Australian special operations element directed an air strike on a group of fighters moving through a ravine at the south end of the valley and apparently protecting an elderly member of the group.[66] Neither the Australians nor any other coalition element was

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[62]Charles H. Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, and James A. Schroder, *Weapon of Choice: U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Military Bookshop, 2010), 333-334.

[63]Naylor, 375.

[64]Naylor, 376.

[65]Billingsley and Grau, 121.

[66]Naylor, 377.

able to conduct a post-strike assessment on the target, but speculation was that the elderly member of the group was Zawahiri and that he sustained a head wound in the attack.[67]

Conclusions from Operation Anaconda

The interdependence demonstrated during Operation Anaconda was unparalleled but largely unplanned. The lack of deliberate interdependence, as evidenced by the pervasive influence of the historic cultural, communication, and mission command barriers, truncated the operation's operational and strategic effects. Tactically, infantry direct and mortar fires and special operator-directed air strikes were successful in inflicting a disproportionately high number of casualties on the enemy fighters, despite the absence of direct communication between the two forces on the battlefield. Operationally, the very planning and execution of Anaconda demonstrated extraordinary cooperation between the two communities; however, the failure to fully synchronize the Special Forces – Afghan militia ground attack forced the operation to proceed without its main effort and allowed Al Qaeda fighters to focus their entire attention on the air assault forces. Most significantly, the US failure to effectively seal the valley passes allowed Al Qaeda leaders and large numbers of their fighters to retreat back into Pakistan at the time of their choosing and was a contributing factor to the ongoing US involvement in Afghanistan.

CASE STUDY #2 – IRAQ SURGE

In contrast to Operation Anaconda, the 2007 Iraq Surge demonstrated the remarkable level of interdependence CF and SOF had developed over the preceding five years. Lessons learned between both Afghanistan and Iraq translated into a widespread understanding of the potential benefits of complementary and deliberate CF-SOF coordination, planning, and operations. While CF and SOF demonstrated interdependence at various points leading up to it,

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[67]Naylor, 377.

the Iraq Surge represented the first large scale and mature example of the synergistic effects interdependence achieves.

<center>Background</center>

By 2006, a virulent Al Qaeda in Iraq and rampant Sunni-Shia sectarian violence threatened the US effort in Iraq. Domestically, popular support for the war in Iraq was all but non-existent, and President Bush was under immense political pressure to bring the war to a swift resolution. Large portions of the population and many politicians disapproved of the war and the Bush administration's handling of it and were insistent upon an immediate reduction in the US commitment in Iraq and a swift conclusion to the war.[68] Many senior military leaders also believed the war had stretched the force too thin and wanted to begin reducing troop levels.[69]

General George Casey, Jr., the then overall commander in Iraq, believed success lay in turning responsibility for Iraq over to the Iraqi government and military, and by late 2006 he began to consolidate US troops on the large forward operating bases (FOBs) outside the population centers in order to speed transition to the Iraqis and set conditions for a steady US troop withdrawal.[70] He and his supporters essentially envisaged a Vietnamization of Iraq.

General David Patraeus believed that, "the plan to hand off security tasks to Iraqi forces clearly was not working," and he developed and championed a largely controversial and unpopular counter-proposal that was diametrically opposed to Casey's plan.[71] Patraeus recommended a significant increase in ground combat troops in order to provide the requisite

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[68]Michael Gordon, "Troop Surge Took Place Amid Doubt and Debate," *New York Times*, August 30, 2008, accessed January 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/31/washington/31military.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Gordon.

[71]*Patraeus David*, "How We Won in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, October 29, 2013, 1, accessed January 2, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/29/david_petraeus_how_we_won_the_surge_in_iraq.

forces to secure the population by positioning maneuver companies and platoons in small combat

outposts (COPs) and joint security stations (JSSs) located among the population.[72] His counter-

proposal originated in the newly-developed counterinsurgency field manual he spearheaded in his

previous assignment as the commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center. A central tenet of

the manual is the requirement for counterinsurgent forces to live and operate among the

population in order to ensure their security with a desired minimum ratio of twenty

counterinsurgents for every 1,000 inhabitants.[73]

Rather than concede to popular opinion and defer to Casey and his supporters, President

Bush announced his adoption of and outlined General Patraeus's surge strategy in a speech in

early January 2007. The strategy committed over 20,000 additional troops to Iraq with the

majority of them augmenting forces in Bagdhad and 4,000 augmenting forces in the Al Anbar

province.[74] In keeping with Patraeus's counterinsurgency doctrine, the new strategy's mission

was to "help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and

to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad

needs."[75] He referred to the previous strategy's failure to hold cleared terrain and the permissive

environment this created for insurgents once US forces departed an area, and he emphasized the

new strategy's ability to reverse that trend with the increased troop levels.[76]

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[72]William Knowlton Jr., *The Surge: General Petraeus and the Turnaround in Iraq* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2010), 9, accessed January 2, 2014, http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/icaf-case-study/icaf_casestudy-1.pdf.

[73]Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 15, 2006), 1-13.

[74]George Bush, "The New Strategy in Iraq" (Address to the Nation, Washington, DC, January 10, 2007).

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

Over the course of 2007 and through the withdrawal of US forces in 2011, the attacks against US forces, sectarian violence, and Al Qaeda in Iraq's operational capability all steadily decreased. In May of 2007, US fatalities reached their single month peak of 126, and by December 2007 that number was down to 23; by June 2008, US fatalities were less than 11 per month.[77] Civilian fatalities during the month of May 2007 were more than 1,700, and by December 2007 that number was down to 500; by June 2008, civilian fatalities were down to an average of 200 per month.[78] In the years between implementation in 2007 and the departure of the last US units in 2011, the surge created the opportunity for the Iraqi government and military to assume control of their country and set the requisite strategic conditions for US troop withdrawal.

Cultural Barriers

By the time conventional surge forces began to arrive in Iraq, CF and SOF had been operating on the same battlefields between Afghanistan and Iraq for over five years. Consequently, the cultural divides between the two had lessened a great deal or at least were much less impactful on operations. While localized biases remained (and likely always will), institutionally, conventional and special operations forces either ignored their traditional cultural divides or were well beyond them.

Lieutenant General Stanley McChrystal's Influence

Throughout the first half of Operation Iraqi Freedom, conventional and JSOC units operated along separate and distinct lines, and rarely, if ever, combined their operations or purposes at any level. This precedent required time, necessity, and enlightened leadership to overcome. The prolonged insurgency in Iraq provided the requisite time and necessity, and

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[77]Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman, and Jacob Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?", *International Security* 37, no. 1 (July 12, 2012): 7, accessed January 26, 2014, http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC_a_00087.

[78]Biddle et al.

Lieutenant General Stanley McChrystal provided a portion of the enlightened leadership. McChrystal assumed command of JSOC in fall of 2003 and brought with him a new perspective on operations with, and even in support of, conventional forces.

JSOC's focus during the surge was to destroy the Al Qaeda command and control structure and that of the Iranian special groups advising Shia insurgents. As JSOC went about its mission, McChrystal emphasized what he referred to as "collaborative warfare" – the integration all available assets internal and external to the organization to broaden the intelligence picture and enable more, and more precise, lethal strikes.[79] This emphasis on the collaborative included integrating with conventional forces operating in the same areas as McChrystal's strike forces. Through this approach, he began to shift the culture within JSOC from one of isolation to one of collaboration by embracing the intelligence and maneuver capabilities conventional forces represented.

McChrystal's efforts at changing the insular JSOC culture began with his assumption of command and the personal example he set. As a major in Desert Storm on the still very small JSOC staff, he learned that SOF needed to establish "better organizational and personal linkages with conventional forces" and "avoid even the appearance of elitist attitudes or arrogance."[80] As he familiarized himself with his units' operations in Iraq after assuming command, McChrystal made it a point to sit down with division commanders and assess their needs and the efficacy of the JSOC units in their areas of operations. When he sat down with the then overall commander in Iraq, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the exchange typified the relationship between the two communities at the time; Sanchez curtly and dismissively told McChrystal, "Your guys are

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[79]Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 380.

[80]Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio, 2013), 52.

doing what we need them to do," without so much as reviewing a map.[81] Nonetheless, McChrystal continued to shift the cultural paradigm between his and the conventional commands.

By late 2006, several months before the surge was fully underway, McChrystal's emphasis on collaborative warfare and working in conjunction with conventional forces permeated the JSOC culture. He encouraged CF flag officers and their subordinate commanders to embed with his strike teams and go on raids, and CF brigade commanders were comfortable enough to regularly talk to and visit with commanders of JSOC's subordinate units.[82] The commander of one of McChrystal's most effective forces went so far as to establish weekly video teleconferences with all brigade commanders in Iraq.[83] In McChrystal's words, his unit "was far from its stereotype as an overly secretive unit running its own war" and "worked hard to drive an all of military effort," and this effort was paying dividends by the time the surge began in earnest.[84]

Communication Barriers

As the cultural barriers eroded, so too did the communication barriers that historically plagued CF-SOF operations and relations. In the years leading up to the surge, CF and SOF began to purposefully share information and intelligence, allowing both communities to feed off each other's efforts. By the time surge operations began in earnest, CF and SOF tapped into each other's vast information and intelligence apparatuses as a matter of standard practice. This symbiotic communication was most evident in lethal targeting.

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[81]McChrystal, 100.

[82]Ibid., 240.

[83]Ibid., 240.

[84]Ibid., 241.

<u>Lethal Targeting</u>

One example of such intelligence sharing occurred in November of 2007, during the first

half of the surge. The 3rd Infantry Division (3 ID) launched an operation in the villages of Betra

and Owesat on the west bank of the Euphrates approximately 26 kilometers southwest of

Baghdad.[85] The purpose of the operation was two-fold: to interdict insurgent lines of

communication running into Baghdad and further pursue the recovery of two Soldiers missing in

action since May of that year.[86]

The division was responsible for the newly-created Multi-National Division-Center

(MND-C), the area south of Baghdad consisting of the Karbala, Babil, and An Najaf Provinces

and two districts in the southern portion of the Baghdad Province, Al Mada'in and Al

Mahmudiyah.[87] Two Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (2/10), one of 3 ID's

subordinate brigades, went missing in May 2007 during an insurgent attack on their positions

overwatching two improvised explosive device craters along a key main supply route in Al

Mahmudiyah.[88] The brigade redeployed that October, but true to the US military's standard of

leaving no man behind, 3 ID continued the effort to recover the two Infantrymen.

The Betra and Owesat villages and the surrounding terrain existed on a seam between the

Marines' area of operations in Al Anbar and 3 ID's MND-C and had seen little coalition presence

over the previous year.[89] Intelligence indicated multiple Al Qaeda Iraq leaders operated out of the

villages to include Mohammed Khalil Ibrahim (MKI), the insurgent leader responsible for the

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[85]Dale Andrade, *Surging South of Baghdad: The 3d Infantry Division and Task Force Marne in Iraq, 2007-2008 (Center of Military History Publication)* (Washington, DC: Dept. of the Army, 2010), 274.

[86]Ibid., 285.

[87]Andrade, 24.

[88]Ibid., 88-89.

[89]Ibid., 275.

abduction of the 2/10 Soldiers.[90] During the latter half of the operation, Infantrymen discovered a cache containing documents and digital media that detailed the kidnapping operation, to include the perpetrators' use of Owesat as a staging and transit area and MKI's routes and safehouses.[91]

By late December, the intelligence picture on MKI was clear enough to lethally target him, and the Division coordinated with an embedded corps-level special operations cell to conduct a kill/capture operation.[92] On 27 December, a Special Forces team directed an airstrike on MKI's vehicle, killing him and two additional insurgents; exploitation of the vehicle confirmed his identity and also yielded suicide vests and assorted weaponry.[93]

In his AO assessment for that week, the brigade commander responsible for the area noted that the elimination of MKI had "an incredible impact in this region," and confirming his assessment, intelligence reports indicated insurgent leaders that had operated in Al Mahmudiyah either left or went inactive.[94] The rapid intelligence hand-over and coordination between 3 ID and its SOF partners were indicative of the advanced communication and intelligence sharing processes CF and SOF had developed by this point in the war. These processes led to a continuous cycle of similar incidents in and around Baghdad during the surge, debilitating hard-line Sunni and Shia insurgent cells and their ability to conduct attacks or regenerate.

Mission Command Barriers

In stark contrast to the fragmented mission command structure in place during Operation Anaconda, the one in place in Iraq was much more functional. All forces in Iraq, to include McChrystal's JSOC units, reported to and ultimately received direction from a single, in country

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[90]Andrade, 283.

[91]Ibid., 287.

[92]Ibid., 288.

[93]Ibid., 288.

[94]Ibid., 288.

commander who was in turn responsible for the direction of the war. As the surge began in early 2007, this commander was General Patraeus.

Arming General Patraeus

Aside from the more obvious benefits of increased understanding, clear tasking authorities, and unity of command and effort absent in Operation Anaconda, this more streamlined construct allowed Patraeus to effectively and quickly leverage SOF information gained and effects achieved on the battlefield, specifically with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. Maliki's Shia background made him naturally sympathetic towards all things Shia (and some hypothesized Iran) and suspicious of all things Sunni. Consequently, he was always interested in US actions against Sunni-based insurgents but quite hesitant towards any actions against Shia-based insurgents.[95]

In early 2007 as the surge was beginning, US Special Forces units under Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP) and their Iraqi SOF partners were targeting leaders in Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM), the Shia insurgent group associated with Muqtada al-Sadr.[96] That March, they captured three key JAM leaders, Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani and two brothers named Laith and Qais Khazali.[97] In the raid to capture Qais Khazali, the Special Forces team captured digital evidence definitively linking the brothers to another kidnapping and execution incident involving five US Soldiers in Karbala.[98]

In their interrogation, the brothers provided information on extensive support they received from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's al-Quds Force, and they confessed their

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[95]McChrystal, 266-67.

[96]Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 164.

[97]Ibid., 166.

[98]Ibid.

operations would not have been feasible without Iranian assistance.[99] Their statements also directly implicated Iran as the source of the insurgents' deadly explosively-formed penetrator IEDs and other advanced weaponry.[100] Other key captures in March led to intelligence revealing the existence of JAM training camps in Tehran, massive Iranian financial support to Shia special groups, and perhaps most damning, Hezbollah's role as Iran's proxy force in Iraq.[101]

Armed with this smoking gun evidence, Patraeus briefed Maliki on JAM's, and by extension Sadr's involvement with Iran and Iran's reciprocal involvement in the war in Iraq; accounts of those present at that briefing indicate Maliki was visibly alarmed.[102] This information confirmed what Patraeus had suspected for some time, and with it, he was able to affect a significant change in Maliki's attitude towards targeting JAM and other Shia special groups. It also alienated Maliki from both Iran and Sadr. In short order, US and Iraqi forces captured twenty-one additional JAM and special group leaders.[103]

The MNF-I command structure was a vast improvement over the one in place during Operation Anaconda. It demonstrated the application of interdependence, allowed Patraeus to swiftly direct and draw upon the efforts of all forces in Iraq, to include all SOF, and increased US effectiveness in the surge.

<div align="center">Tactical Effects</div>

Enabled by the diminished cultural, communication, and mission command barriers, CF and SOF slowly developed tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) throughout the Iraq war

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[99]Robinson, 167.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Ibid., 167.

[103]Ibid., 168.

that reached their evolutionary peak during the surge. These CF-SOF TTPs grew out of their increased interdependence and ultimately defeated the insurgencies in and surrounding Baghdad.

CF Clearing and SOF Strike Operations

Surge forces began to arrive in Baghdad in February of 2007, and by mid-June all five surge brigades had arrived. As they arrived, Patraeus and then Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander, immediately employed them in clearing operations in insurgent-controlled enclaves in and around Baghdad. These clearing operations then set the conditions for the establishment of combat outposts and joint security stations in and among the Iraqi populace.

Simultaneously, McChrystal's JSOC elements began to implement a new tactic wherein they conducted their kill/capture operations in conjunction with the CF clearing operations. As CF began to clear a neighborhood, the insurgents' cell phone communications would dramatically increase as they alerted each other and attempted to depart the targeted areas. Their increased electronic communications then made them considerably more vulnerable to JSOC's signals interception.[104] Commenting on these CF-SOF TTPs, Colonel Bill Rapp, the head of Patraeus's Commander's Initiatives Group, stated, "We didn't see how essential conventional forces are in the counterterror fight…When you stay in the neighborhood, they have no place to stay, they have to talk more, because they're mobile, so we can catch them."[105] Patraeus agreed; in his end of year report to Secretary Gates, he stated, "If the sanctuaries in which CT [counter-terrorist] targets live and work are not reduced by securing the population, then nightly raids conducted by

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[104]Robinson, 106.

[105]Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press HC, The, 2009), 193.

our top end units will have no lasting effect on the disposition of the population or the ability of the terrorist network to thrive."[106]

Operational Effects

The combination of CF clear-hold and SOF strike operations had an almost immediate impact. Tactical leaders noticed an atmospheric shift in their areas of operations as company commanders reported a measurable increase in information received from the local population.[107] By early summer 2007, tactical progress, in the words of a 1st Cavalry Division planner, "began cascading," and an undertow of progress developed which led even previously skeptical senior officers to reconsider their opinions on the surge.[108] Despite an actual increase in violence, the mood of the populace began to shift away from the insurgents and toward the US counter-insurgents, and Sunnis began to reject Al Qaeda.[109] In Al Qaeda's Al Anbar stronghold, this shift in Sunni attitude was already in progress.

<u>Sunni Awakening</u>

In the latter half of 2006, several months ahead of the formal surge, Colonel Sean MacFarland and his 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division (1/1 AD) partnered with SOF in Ramadi, and together they pursued Al Qaeda Iraq through a more indirect medium that came to be known as the "Sunni Awakening." While not a formal component of the surge proper, the Sunni Awakening helped set conditions for the its eventual success, so that by the time the surge brigades were fully operational in mid 2007, Al Anbar province had gone from an Al Qaeda stronghold to largely pacified.

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[106]Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 269-270.

[107]Ricks, 237-39.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Ibid.

When MacFarland and 1/1 AD arrived in Ramadi, Al Qaeda was firmly in control of the city with what MacFarland estimated at 5000 fighters.[110] Their National Guard predecessors had conceded entire areas of the city to Al Qaeda to include the entire city center.[111] MacFarland's guidance was to "fix Ramadi, but don't do a Fallujah," and MacFarland was willing to try "whatever made sense."[112] In addition to preempting Patraeus's strategy of stationing small units in and among the population in order to provide security, MacFarland co-opted and partnered with Ramadi's Sunni tribes who had grown resentful of Al Qaeda's heavy-handed tactics. Together, they slowly wrested control of the city from Al Qaeda.

Behind the scenes supporting 1/1 AD's efforts in Ramadi was one of McChrystal's strike forces. Continuing JSOC's increasing trend of linking in with conventional battlespace owners and in a significant departure from their traditional mission set, the commander and his men integrated with and often subordinated themselves to MacFarland in order to advance the momentum he had gained in Ramadi.[113] The unit's snipers would covertly occupy and secure buildings MacFarland intended to use as combat outposts; they then helped secure those outposts from the periphery as Army and Marine companies built them.[114] They also provided a weeklong training course to the tribal "emergency battalion" volunteers, men who were willing to fight but for one reason or another did not meet standards for formal service.[115]

By the end of December, twelve of the area tribes were "cooperative," six neutral, and only three were "uncooperative"; by mid-2007, a month could go by without a US fatality, and

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[110]Ricks, 62.

[111]Ibid., 63.

[112]Ibid., 61-63.

[113]McChrystal. 242.

[114]Ricks, 65.

[115]Ibid., 67.

IEDs significantly decreased in both number and sophistication.[116] Through interdependence, 1/1 AD and their SEAL partners effectively implemented two primary tenets of counterinsurgency: securing the population by living among them and building and partnering with local security forces. In so doing, they and their tribal allies checked and reversed the momentum Al Qaeda had gained in Al Anbar, and their efforts served as a key shaping operation for the surge's overall success. While Baghdad's size and demographic disparity would make it much more challenging, both Patraeus and Odierno saw Ramadi and Al Anbar as a model for their overall surge strategy.[117]

<div align="center">Strategic Effects</div>

CF and SOF interdependence and the tactical and operational effects it achieved combined to achieve key strategic objectives. In his speech to the nation announcing the surge, President Bush stated, "The most urgent priority for success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad."[118] In and around Baghdad, the combination of conventional clear-hold operations and special operations kill/capture missions defeated the Shia and Sunni insurgent groups that threatened Iraqi and coalition forces, the government of Iraq, and the Iraqi population.

At the end of 2007, attacks were down over sixty percent compared to the preceding six months and civilian deaths were seventy percent lower than the previous year.[119] By the time Patraeus provided his second testimony to Congress in April 2008, attacks had dropped to a level at or below their 2005 benchmark, civilian deaths were less than 500 per month (down from approximately 1,500 per month sixteen months earlier), ethno-sectarian violence showed similar

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[116]Ricks, 71.

[117]Ibid., 72.

[118]George Bush, "The New Strategy in Iraq" (Address to the Nation, Washington, DC, January 10, 2007).

[119]Multi-National Forces Iraq, "Multi-National Force-Iraq Charts to Accompany the Testimony of Gen David H. Petraeus 8-9 April 2008" (charts presented in conjunction with Congressional Testimony, Washington, DC).

downward trends, the monthly rate of high profile attacks (typically variations of suicide bomb attacks) had decreased by a similar rate, and Al Qaeda Iraq's influence had shrunk from the Al Qaim-Baghdad and Mosul-Baghdad corridors to essentially Mosul only.[120]

In his surge speech, President Bush also directly addressed Al Qaeda's presence in Al Anbar and its use of that province as its "home base" in Iraq.[121] Defining his objective for the province, he said, "America's men and women in uniform took away Al Qaeda's safe haven in Afghanistan, and we will not allow them to re-establish it in Iraq."[122] Conventional and special operations forces there collaborated to build and empower the grass roots Sunni resistance against Al Qaeda that transformed the province from one of the most dangerous in Iraq to a model for counterinsurgency. The defeat of Al Qaeda in Al Anbar then allowed Patraeus to focus security efforts almost exclusively on Baghdad.

In his book, *The War Within*, Bob Woodward cites JSOC's kill/capture operations and the Sunni Awakening as two of three factors "as, or even more, important than the surge" that led to the dramatic drop in violence, but Mr. Woodward's assessment is overly simplistic.[123] While he is accurate in assessing their efficacy in reducing the cycle of violence in Iraq, he is incorrect in identifying those events as separate from the surge; they were actually integral parts of it. CF-SOF interdependence directly contributed to the establishment of acceptable levels of security in and around Baghdad and the expulsion of Al Qaeda from Al Anbar. These events in turn contributed to the realization of key strategic objectives, the conditions for an honorable US troop withdrawal, and a viable opportunity for the government of Iraq and its security forces to provide for and secure the Iraqi population.

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[120]Multi-National Forces Iraq.

[121]George Bush, "The New Strategy in Iraq" (Address to the Nation, Washington, DC, January 10, 2007).

[122]Ibid.

[123]Woodward, 379.

Conclusions from the Iraq Surge

The five years of experience and the absence of persistent historical barriers drew a stark contrast in the level and quality of CF-SOF interdependence between Operation Anaconda and the Iraq surge. In the Iraq surge, CF and SOF capitalized on deliberately-developed systems that demonstrated true interdependence at echelon and achieved significant tactical, operational, and strategic effects. The intentional combination of CF clearing operations and SOF kill/capture operations led to an almost immediate and discernible shift in the attitudes of Iraqis away from the insurgents; CF-SOF efforts in Ramadi between MacFarland's 1/1 AD and one of McChrystal's strike forces enabled the tribes of the Sunni Awakening to seize control of Al Anbar from Al Qaeda and serve as a de facto shaping operation for surge forces in Baghdad; the cumulative effect of these CF-SOF actions in Baghdad and Al Anbar directly contributed to the surge achieving two critical strategic objectives – security in Baghdad and the expulsion of Al Qaeda from Al Anbar. In his recently published memoir and commenting on the factors that allowed US and Iraq forces to "prevail in a tough fight," Peter Mansoor, Patreaus's executive officer during the surge, states, "successful operations against networked terrorist and insurgent groups required a combination of special operations and conventional forces…. With both conventional and special operations forces working together during the surge, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq and the Joint Special Operations Command were able to gut Al Qaeda in Iraq."[124]

Conclusion

Over the almost thirteen years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, interdependence grew from essentially non-existent to a crucial element of CF and SOF operations and is now at the forefront of emerging doctrine. Prior to 9/11, systemic mission command, cultural, and communication barriers set a long-lasting precedent of isolation and distrust. After 9/11,

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[124]Mansoor, 269-270.

circumstances and necessity gradually eroded those barriers and drove CF and SOF to recognize their interdependence, and it became the norm in combat, particularly in the latter halves of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. Capitalizing on their newly-developed interdependence, CF and SOF achieved effects that under their former paradigm of distrust and isolation would not have been possible. By 2012, as it reflected on lessons learned in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Army began to institutionally appreciate the value of interdependence. In its bottom line statement on CF-SOF integration, the 2012 JCOA study declared, "In Iraq and Afghanistan, multiple, simultaneous, large scale operations executed in dynamic environments required the integration of SOF and GPF [general purpose forces], creating a force multiplying effect for both."[125]

Operation Anaconda was the first post 9/11 operation that required CF and SOF interdependence. However, the circumstances leading up to Anaconda led to accidental and fractured cooperation, and it fell short of its intended decisive effects. Consequently, Anaconda demonstrates the limits of interdependence when the Army and its leaders do not deliberately invest in it. Conversely, the 2007 Iraq surge demonstrates refined, deliberate, and practically institutionalized interdependence and the synergistic effects it achieves.

The evolution of CF-SOF collaboration over the previous five years breached the historical barriers and resulted in highly interdependent CF-SOF tactics, techniques, and procedures. This highly advanced level of interdependence contributed to the defeat of the insurgency in and around Baghdad and the expulsion of Al Qaeda from its self-proclaimed capital in Al Anbar. In an official 2008 memorandum summarizing his guidance on how to fight in Iraq, Patraeus specifically stated, "Counter-terrorist forces alone cannot defeat Al Qaeda and other

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[125]Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 22.

extremists; success requires all forces and means at our disposal…. Employ Coalition and Iraqi conventional and special operations forces, Sons of Iraq, and all other available multipliers."[126]

With the completion of the war in Iraq, and as the one in Afghanistan comes to a close, the Army, its conventional forces, and Army and joint special operations forces are in a tenuous position with respect to the difficult and valuable lessons learned over the last decade with respect to CF-SOF interdependence. At this point, the historical cultural, communication, and mission command barriers are almost negligible, and CF and SOF communities widely embrace their interdependence. MG Sacolick and BG Grigsby aptly capture the current state of interdependence and its future importance:

> In Iraq and Afghanistan, operational necessity drove battlefield synchronization and integration of the joint force founded on personal relationships. Integration that relies on personal relationships forged on the battlefield, however, is transient unless made operational and institutional and instilled in our forces from the very beginning of professional military education and throughout all planning and training. The closure of the Iraq theater and the drawdown in Afghanistan will reduce the impetus behind current interdependence initiatives and limit opportunities for shared operational experience. Unless we start now to codify and expand interdependence in the force, we risk losing momentum and reverting to pre-9/11 mind-sets…. Our history, however, shows that these lessons quickly fade unless reinforced in doctrine, organizations, training, leadership and education.[127]

Additionally, and reinforcing MG Sacolick's and BG Grigsby's position, General Odierno recently stated in an essay for *Foreign Affairs* magazine, "the army will need to preserve and enhance its relationship with joint special operations forces. The evolution of this partnership over the past decade has been extraordinary, and the ties can become even stronger as we continue to develop new operational concepts, enhance our training, and invest in new capabilities."[128]

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[126]Ricks, 369.

[127]Sacolick and Grigsby, 40-42.

[128]General Raymond Odierno, "The U.S. Army in a Time of Transition: Building a Flexible Force," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2012, accessed February 13, 2014, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137423/raymond-t-odierno/the-us-army-in-a-time-of-transition.

Recent doctrinal updates, particularly the adoption of the Engagement Warfighting Function, provide a firm foundation for the preservation and institutionalization of CF-SOF interdependence. However, if the Army and the nation are to continue to benefit from it, the Army must heed General Odierno's advice and aggressively and demonstrably build upon on interdependence's newly-established doctrinal foundation through practical application in both the generating force and the operational Army.

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